



State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services



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A Note from Commissioner Macy
October 2011

My apologies on the tardiness of this note. Like many of you, my days have been a blur of activities. The following is only a snapshot of a wide series of activities that I and others have been engaged in recently. I should also start this piece with a thank you to the many staff that have sent notes or made comments in our listening tours about my "Terry's notes." It's great to get such positive feedback.

First I'd like to acknowledge our latest retirements from Central Office. Vincent O'Connell left last week after several years of guiding our fiscal ship. As many know, Vince stayed on well past his planned retirement and then extended his deadline again for some months to help with my transition. Mary McKay also left last week, but as you know we're hoping to see her back very soon to help recruit and train two new Regional Directors. Mark Warzecha also left last week after providing years of leadership to our Information Technology division. My many thanks go out to these staff as well as to the many staff throughout the agency over the last week or so. We very much appreciate all their years of dedicated service!

Last week, we finished our round of listening tours with public staff in the West Region following a very well attended "Meet and Greet". North and South Region public staff listening tours were the previous week. I have to say how much I appreciate the extremely positive feedback from all. I've been hearing many good ideas about how we can improve DDS services and specific ideas about how better to support our families. The many comments about how staff would like to apply their years of experience in a new way to serve families were particularly impressive. All of your comments will be incorporated in what I hope will be a very dynamic Five Year Plan for the Department.

Each one of my public listening tours has been an opportunity for me to address the fears of some public staff that we were going to privatize various state services. I would like to restate here again, that this is not the case. While we will continue to consolidate some homes where reduced census requires it, there are no plans to close state homes to privatize services. Quite the contrary, I have witnessed firsthand the significant skills and professionalism of our staff and very much want to explore new and innovative ways to use those years of experience to help families who are in need of support. I am confident we'll be able to build on some of the past efforts to redeploy our valuable staff resources in new ways.

We have a whole new set of paintings available for viewing in my office. Thanks again to Chris McNaboe and her staff at Horizons, we have new Kerri Quirk pictures and additional work by a new artist Christopher Straus. Chris, as many

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know, is a long time friend who now oversees a uniquely creative agency supporting individuals in our North Region. I've known her since our days as Summer Recreation staff at Hartford Regional Center many years ago. She has graciously volunteered to coordinate our revolving art show. So stop in and take a look!

Among my many meetings outside of the agency, I recently attended my first with the Autism Council and an Office of Protection and Advocacy (OPA) Board of Directors meeting. The Autism Council is a very hardworking group of volunteers who are dedicated to improving our supports for persons with autism spectrum disorder who receive services from the DDS Autism Division. Connecticut is ever so gradually transitioning from pilot services to waived services for these individuals and their families. I am excited to be part of the effort to implement the three autism waivers in Connecticut and to work with Siobhan Morgan who is helping lead this initiative while maintaining her many other duties with the Department.

My meeting with the OPA Board was particularly meaningful to me as I have worked with its Executive Director, Jim McGaughey and some of his staff for many years. We share many common values regarding the rights of persons with intellectual disabilities and it was good to be able to take time to share my thoughts with them on how we can continue to work together in the future.

In keeping with my dedication to making it a priority to listen to the people we support, I have initiated a new process of meeting with our Self Advocate Coordinators (SACs) on a quarterly basis to seek their input on Departmental policy issues. Our first topic was a discussion of their views on what "Community Living" means to them. Working together with our Self Advocacy staff leadership team of Beth Aura Miller, Robin Wood and Greg McMahon, we were able to identify issues that were important to SACs as they weighed in on how DDS should define "Community Supports". A more comprehensive summary of their feedback will be provided to all in the near future.

A source document that we used to discuss what "Community Living" means to self advocates can be found on a new page of DDS website entitled "Community of Providers". On that page, you will find a copy of a recent position paper developed by self advocate organizations from around the country entitled "Keeping the Promise". As I have introduced at our listening tours, I feel strongly that we can better support our families if we break down some of our artificial private/public divisions and begin to find new ways to work together. I was very encouraged that this issue was brought up in our regional listening tours and that many of you support a new dialogue on this subject. This new web resource "Community of Providers" will be a place that I will publish documents and ideas that represent new directions to be considered and it will be open to review by all.

I thought I'd share some information with you about monthly meetings I hold with Private Sector Executive staff called "Trades Meetings." Agency staff who attend are chosen by our three trade organizations: the Connecticut Association of Nonprofits (CAN), the Connecticut *Community Providers* Association (CCPA) and the Arc of Connecticut (ArcCT) (not really a trade organization). These meetings provide an opportunity for our DDS leadership team to meet with a variety of Executive Directors. The location of the meetings is rotated to facilitate face time with a variety of provider agencies. One of our current and most pressing topics for providers is the long awaited transition to uniform service rates for day services.

I'd like to remind everyone that there is still time to submit input into DDS's Five Year plan. A draft of the plan will be made available by the middle of this month. I will also be doing a video about the plan that will of course be available to all. Once again thank you for all your ideas and especially thank you for your daily hard work on behalf of those we all support!

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